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THE

SYSTEM

OCCASIONED BY THE

SPEECH

OF

LEONARD SMELT, Esq.

Late Sub-Governor to their Royal Highnesses

THE

PRINCE OF WALES,

AND

BISHOP OF OSNABRUGH,

At the MEETING at

YORK,

DECEMBER 30, 1779.

——————— From whence
But from the author of all ill, could spring
So deep a malice ——————— though slow
Yet ever plotting ——— So much the fear
Of thunder, and the sword of Michael
Wrought still within them; and no less desire
To found this nether empire, which might rise
By *policy* and long process of time.

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THE

SYSTEM, &c.

I Have read lately in the public Papers a Speech, ſaid to have been delivered by Mr. Smelt, late Sub-governor to their Royal Highneſſes the Prince of Wales and the Biſhop of Oſnabrugh, at a meeting holden at York the 30th of December. I have waited for ſome time to ſee whether that gentleman would not diſavow the publication in the moſt authentic manner; but as he has thought fit to acquieſce in ſilence under the imputation of it, I am no longer at liberty to doubt that it conveys his real ſentiments, and contains a faithful repreſentation of thoſe ſuſpicions which he choſe to make public upon that ſolemn occaſion.

It is not to Mr. Smelt that I now addreſs myſelf. Though he is perſonally a ſtranger to me, I am willing to believe implicitly in

the teſtimonies that were that day given to the virtues of his *private* character, even by thoſe who differed the moſt widely from the maxims he endeavoured to eſtabliſh, and the arguments he laboured to enforce. I am, therefore, to give him credit as an honeſt man, that he ſpoke what he ſincerely thought. He affirms, that "during his retirement, he had dedicated his time to the ſtudy of the conſtitution, and other national objects." His opinions, therefore, are not lightly taken up. They are founded upon ſtudy and mature deliberation: it would be the height of preſumption in me to think any arguments of mine could convert him to the cauſe of freedom. Much leſs ſhall I be inclined to attribute to him thoſe motives of ſelf-intereſt, which he ſo oſtentatiouſly diſclaims in his own perſon, but which he has ſo *liberally* aſcribed to conduct of others; many of whom, if he had allowed himſelf to reflect, or had wiſhed to inform himſelf, have given proofs of their public diſintereſtedneſs, at leaſt equal to the ſacrifice *he then* made, to entitle himſelf to the confidence of his hearers. I will tell him only, that his principles are not

my

my principles; and I truſt it will be found that they are not the principles of the conſtitution, or of the people of England; at leaſt of thoſe who have not lived ſo near the *ſplendour* of *Majeſty*, as to be dazzled by its rays. Various are the deluſions by which the minds of men are warped from ſound judgment. It would be endleſs to inveſtigate the ſecret cauſes which produce a perverſion of the underſtanding; let it ſuffice when they bring forth dangerous and alarming doctrines, if the errors be confuted, and the ſafety and happineſs of mankind preſerved from the effects of their baneful tendency.

It is then to the people of England at large, it is to the body of the Freeholders, I addreſs myſelf as an Engliſhman, and as a Freeholder. It is their attention I wiſh to awaken at this awful criſis. The appeal muſt be made to their feelings and underſtandings; and by their deciſion, we muſt abide. They alone can preſerve the conſtitution by the known means which that very conſtitution has placed in their power, unleſs the revived doctrines of Toryiſm, *which are now avowed openly*, by one who muſt

muſt be conſidered as ſpeaking the language of the Court, ſhould receive their ſanction and adoption.

The ſyſtem of our Government is by no means intricate: like moſt uſeful machines, it conſiſts but of few parts, and they are ſimple. King, Lords, and Commons. When united, they form the legiſlative body, the ſupreme power; when conſidered ſeparately, they not only have each of them their peculiar function, but are contrived to act as checks upon each other. Either of theſe powers annihilated or abſorbed into another, the conſtitution is changed. A new Government muſt ariſe, as different from the preſent as the conſtitutions of Ruſſia, of Venice, or of Holland. The Commons choſen out of the body of the people, and returning back to the maſs of their conſtituents at ſtated periods, form the Democratical part, and are the guardians of our purſe and liberty. The Lords, who not being a fluctuating body, by their birth are entitled to their ſeats in the great hereditary Council of the kingdom, form an Ariſtocratical power; to give gravity, dignity, and conſiſtency to our laws, by their

their property, the rank they hold, and the reſpect they owe to their ſituations. To preſerve activity, energy, and deciſion in the Government, the *executive principle* is devolved upon the Monarch, under certain limitations, who is reſponſible to the other two branches, through his Miniſters, for the exerciſe of the truſt repoſed in him. Suppoſe now, for a moment, that the Houſe of Commons could either become incorporated with the Lords, or ſitting ſeparate, could vote to themſelves the ſame privileges, aſſuming to them and their heirs for ever thoſe ſeats in the Legiſlature which they now hold by the election of the people. Suppoſe that the Houſe of Peers were to be deprived of their hereditary honours, and to be ſent to Parliament by the voices of the Freeholders; does not every one ſee that ſuch a change muſt eſſentially alter the whole ſyſtem in favour of Democracy or Ariſtocracy? Again, let the King have the power of naming the Members of the Houſe of Commons, or diſplacing the Peers at his pleaſure; or let offices and the executive powers of the Government be aſſumed by either, or both the Houſes of Parliament;

does

does any one doubt that ſuch an encroachment, on one ſide or the other, muſt either annihilate the ſhare our conſtitution has allotted to Monarchy, or render it abſolute: in ſhort, that our King would either become a Deſpot or a Doge of Venice. Now if an open encroachment of one branch upon the other neceſſarily deſtroys that equilibrium upon which depends the œconomy of the whole, will it be the leſs deſtroyed in that the encroachment is brought on ſilently, gradually, imperceptibly, but as effectually by *fraud* as if by *force*? The difference will only be this---That in the latter inſtance, the people have their rights *ſtolen* from them; are lulled into ſecurity by a falſe appearance, which, like the Senate of Auguſtus, interpoſes to their reſentments a ſpecious phantom, inſtead of a reality; outward forms, which they have been accuſtomed to reſpect, but which bind only the yoke of tyranny the faſter upon their necks, by the ſemblance of having given their own conſents to thoſe edicts, which the will of the Prince ſhall have thought fit to impoſe upon them. Better, if they chuſe ſlavery, that they ſhould freely *give* what they

they think it not worth while to *defend*, and, like the people of Denmark, make a voluntary ſurrender of their liberties at the feet of the Throne. They will then know at leaſt, the form of Government they live under, and where to direct their indignation, when the oppreſſions of power ſhall be no longer ſupportable.

I flatter myſelf, I need ſay no more to prove that he, who is a friend to the conſtitution of Great-Britain, muſt be tried by this teſt, and by this teſt alone: does he endeavour to keep ſeparate, and to maintain the energy of the three component parts of it, or does he by weakening or blending them endeavour to throw more power into any one of them, than was aſſigned to it in its inſtitution. The reader will obſerve, that I do not here aſſert, that no man can think himſelf a ſincere friend to the intereſts of his country, who wiſhes an alteration in the form of our Government. Men think ſo variouſly in political ſpeculations, that I ſhould not be ſurpriſed if there were found amongſt us ſome few, (and very few I truſt they are) whoſe opinion might lead them to the ſide of a Go-

vernment merely popular : I wiſh I could add, that I believe Mr. Smelt to be the only man amongſt us, whoſe opinions lean to the throwing the whole power into the Crown. Theſe are the two extremes equally to be dreaded by the friend to the conſtitution, whoſe motto is the old adage, *nolumus Leges Angliæ mutari.*

Human inſtitutions muſt, from their nature, be imperfect, and imperfections there certainly are in our form of government, as in every other. It is impoſſible that a ſyſtem ſo finely imagined, and which embraces in it the objects of all other forms of government, can be totally exempt from their defects. But if thoſe defects ariſe not from the *principles* of our conſtitution, but from the paſſions of human nature, which no laws can keep within the exact bounds that duty preſcribes to them, there is no other remedy than, that every honeſt citizen ſhould keep up a diligent and unwearied attention, to oppoſe the growing evil, before it becomes too ſtrong for their endeavours, and for all the guards which the laws and the wiſdom of our anceſtors have provided for our ſecurity.

To

To conſider whether ſuch defects had not actually produced a danger, which, if not immediately attended to, will ſubvert *in toto* the ſpirit and ſoul of our conſtitution, after having already occaſioned to us ſuch political evils and diſtreſſes, as affect the very exiſtance of our State. To provide ſome remedy for the cauſe, and to ſtop if poſſible, the ruin brought upon us as the effect, I take to have been the occaſion of the meeting holden in the firſt county of the kingdom, on the 30th of December. If the diſtreſſes of the country are real, and if they can in a great meaſure be fairly traced up to the amazing increaſe of the influence of the Crown, will not every Engliſhman, who has the good of his country at heart, unite in thinking it high time to oppoſe that influence, to mitigate at leaſt, as far as poſſible, the effects of it upon the two other branches of the Legiſlature? If any man can be found, to doubt whether ſuch influence be really increaſed, or in what proportion, let him caſt his eyes only on the ſtate of the revenue, under the adminiſtration of the Crown, at any former period, and compare it with the ſtate at pre-

ſent, I will truſt to him, in the concluſion, that in a mixed Government, like ours, the Prince who acquires to himſelf the powers of corruption, will employ it to that purpoſe.

At the time of the Revolution, "*The expences of the late King James the Second, by actual payments in money for three years, from Lady-day, 1685, to Lady-day, 1688,*" upon a medium, as delivered to Parliament, ſtood as follows:

To the Navy	417,462	12	10 1/2
Ordnance	83,493	9	3 1/6
Forces	610,883	1	5 1/2
Houſehold	66,006	2	2 1/4
Treaſurer of the Chamber	28,443	5	2 1/2
Wardrobe	15,125	3	11 1/2
Robes	2,676	14	9
Works	24,663	19	3 1/2
Foreign Miniſters	32,657	9	7
Stables	11,045	13	0 2/3
Sundry fees and ſalaries paid at the Exchequer and alibi	56,495	12	7
Penſions and Annuities	146,703	17	3 1/2
Band of Penſioners	6,000	0	0
Bounties in great ſums paid at the Exchequer	27,680	10	8 1/6
Secret Services, per Mr. Guy	89.968	8	2 3/4
Per Secretary of State	6,066	13	4
Sir Stephen Fox	9,333	6	8
Privy Purſe	26,416	13	4
Mint paid out of coinage			
Jewels and plate	15,740	6	0
Impoſt Bills	96	12	0
Contingencies not reducible to the foregoing heads	22,403	6	3 1/4
Total £.	1,699,363	2	0

The

The amount then of all the *expences* of Government, when King William came to the Throne, fell ſhort of *one million ſeven hundred thouſand pounds.* It has been calculated that the Civil Liſt alone of George the Third, together with his German revenues, intereſt of debts due to the late King, hereditary revenue from Ireland, and other payments, (excluſive of the revenues which were produced to him by America, before the war, from quit-rents, &c.) amount to no leſs a ſum than *two millions three hundred and fifty thouſand pounds.*

In the ſupplies for the year 1779,

	£.	s.	d.
The Navy amounted to —	4,589,069	6	1
Army — —	5,308,361	1	3¾
Militia — —	704,721	4	8
Ordnance —	917,374	8	9
Miſcellaneous ſervices —	3,163,914	8	2
Deficiencies —	206,175	17	4½
Total —	£. 14,889,616	8	4

The total amount of the taxes, including the collecting them is about 13,000,000l. ſo that adding to them one million vote of credit, they ſtill fall ſhort of theſe ſervices

vices alone voted as above, in the ſum of 889,616l. 8s. 4d. to which deficiency muſt be likewiſe added the deduction of the whole expence of the collection.

The charge then of making good this deficiency; and of the 800,000l. Civil Liſt, which has recently been augmented in one hundred thouſand pounds, and is, in future, to have the addition of another hundred thouſand pounds, for the maintenance of the Royal Family, together with other expences of Government, not included under the ſix foregoing heads, can be no otherwiſe provided for but by increaſe of the national debt, in ſome way or other. That debt approaches already to near 200,000,000l. the intereſt of which is ſuppoſed to amount to *half the total of the landed income*. All this annual expence by loan is ſo much additional means of corruption, jobs, and partialities in the power of the Miniſter, through whoſe hands it paſſes, both in the bargains with the ſubſcribers, and in the expenditure of the money ſubſcribed. Add to all this, the influence acquired to the Crown, not only from the collection of theſe immenſe ſums iſſuing through

through the Treaſury, the Collector and Diſperſer of which are at the appointment of that Board; but from the opportunities of favour in all the nominations, through ſuch extended ſervices, by ſea and land: the power that is derived from Ireland; 'till lately from America; ſtill from the Weſt-Indies; the diſpoſal of Church benefices; the aſcendant the Miniſter has gained over the Eaſt-India Company, where he is become almoſt *the ſole Director*; (a power which would alone ſuffice for the ambition of the Miniſter of any kingdom of the ſecond order in Europe) the interference he has found means to introduce into almoſt every Company eſtabliſhed in England. In ſhort, follow, if it is poſſible, this influence through all its labyrinth, you will ſcarcely find a family ſo obſcure, in the remoteſt corner of the iſland (except thoſe who actually till the ſoil) that does not, in ſome degree, through themſelves or their connections, look up with hopes or fears to him that *gives*, and to him that *takes away*. Is there a Repreſentative of a county, or a ſingle borough, who is not ſooner or later

ſent

ſent by his conſtituents to demand favours for individuals, or jobs for corporations?

This, reader, is the ſituation in which we are told, that the cauſe of our national calamities proceeds from the *too little power of the Crown*. Alas! what further power can we beſtow upon it, unleſs, by the repeal of all our laws, we ſubmit our lives, our liberties, and the poor remains of our property, to the arbitrary diſcretion of the Monarch? Thank God we are ſtill permitted to be in poſſeſſion of our *Habeas Corpus*, that bulwark of our freedom; nor can our blood be ſpilt but by the conſent of our juries. Yet, if the guardians of the common purſe are gained by the ſpirit of corruption, and that ſpirit is ſuffered to acquire ſtrength every hour, in the ſame ratio as our diſtreſs accumulates, it needs no prophet from the dead to tell how long thoſe invaluable privileges will remain to us, which I fear we at this moment owe rather to the weakneſs of our Governors than the virtues of our Parliaments.

Far be it from me to imitate Mr. Smelt in tearing aſide the veil that covers the *ſplendour* of *Majeſty*, by bringing forward the

perſon

perſon of the King for the diſcuſſion of the public. His Majeſty deſerves, I dare ſay, the ſacred appellation of a *Patriot*, or well-wiſher to his country. What Prince deſires its deſtruction? Mr. Smelt alſo is a Patriot after his own faſhion: but he will permit me to ſay, the expreſſion of the *only Patriot in the country* does imply a ſingular mode of thinking or of acting, which diſtinguiſhes the perſon to whom it is applied from all others, who feel themſelves, by their honeſt labours, entitled to that flattering epithet. The private virtues of his Majeſty are too well known to need the teſtimony of any man. The maxim, founded in the *civility of the law*, "that the King can do no wrong," refers us to his Miniſters, and to the annals of his reign for his character in the liſt of Princes.---Our law knows only *the Crown*, not the Prince who wears it. And if the protection of our law is not ſtrong enough to defend us from the errors of the worſt of Kings, we ſhall hold our liberties by a precarious tenure under the wiſeſt and the beſt of Monarchs; nor would it be ſufficient argument to induce us to ſuffer the chains to be rivetted upon us, that it is left to future times to let us feel the

weight of them. Cruel, indeed, would it be for Princes, if all the miſchiefs of their Governments were to be attributed directly to their perſonal character. *Educated* in the luſt of power by thoſe who will never think their authority ſufficient, whilſt there is one of the rights of mankind exempted; ſurrounded by flattery and miſrepreſentation; incapable of ſeeing for themſelves, and truſting always to thoſe whoſe intereſt is to deceive; how happy ought they to eſteem themſelves, when they can act only through the miniſtry of others, whoſe miſconduct is liable to the reviſion of the public, and to the chaſtiſement of the laws. This is the language of the Britiſh conſtitution; this that doctrine of Whiggiſm which is ſo ſeverely reprobated by the *Inſtructor* of our future Sovereign---a doctrine as eſſential, however, to the ſecurity, the happineſs, and glory of the Prince who has the wiſdom to adopt it, as it is neceſſary to the very exiſtence of a free Government. And what has been the ſtruggle of this reign, but the *contrary principle* unhappily inſtilled into the boſom of unſuſpecting youth by the intereſted ambition of *Inſtructors*. The terror of ſubmitting to be adviſed by thoſe who

were

were capable of adviſing, what evils, what public calamities, what perſonal inſults, and humiliations, has it not occaſioned? But, therefore, the power of the Crown ſhould be augmented---No---not all the authority of the moſt deſpotic country has ever yet been able to *command* reſpect where it is not ſupported by the conduct of the Miniſters, and the approbation of an applauding people. In vain have the powers of corruption extended themſelves in diffuſing the *undue influence* of the Crown, whilſt its juſt prerogatives have fallen into contempt. In vain has an unwearied ſyſtem been purſued of dividing, weakening, villifying every thing that was great and reſpectable amongſt us. In vain all the arts of a Medicean policy, employed to propagate diſtruſt, diſſenſion, and diſunion through the land. Unhappy ſyſtem! what has it produced, but ſtrength and vigour to our enemies; revolt through all the dependencies of our Empire; faction, ruin, and conſternation, in Great Britain.

Twenty years are not yet elapſed ſince his preſent Majeſty, at his acceſſion, found this country the envy of all Europe. The Houſe of Bourbon humbled at her feet---her trade ruined, her fleet annihilated---vanquiſhed

in Aſia, driven from the continent of America, flying before the Britiſh flag in all parts of the world---At home, happy and united, we could ſcarce reap the harveſt of our commerce, and our ſtreets reſounded with exultation---What was the ſource of all this national power?---Was it alone the millions we expended? But our diſgraces, our ruin, have proved more expenſive to us---And the loſs of America will have coſt us dearer than the war we engaged in for its ſecurity, with all our conqueſts and acquiſitions. Has the nation loſt its character? Are our ſeamen leſs brave, our Commanders leſs able, than when we gave the law to that element, which now ſcarcely protects our coaſts from inſult and invaſion? It is that *ſyſtem* which the *ſecret Counſellors* of the Crown (be they whom they will) have ſtedfaſtly and uniformly ſupported, that has undone this country. From the firſt half hour of the preſent reign, talents have been ſuſpected, reputation eſteemed dangerous, popularity a crime, and even the union of friendſhip, or of kindred, looked upon with jealous eyes---Hence all the artifice by which, one by one, every old ſervant of the Crown was driven from the Council Board.

That

That genius, whoſe name will never be mentioned but with gratitude and veneration by poſterity; that ſun which is ſo lately ſet to riſe no more, was the firſt ſacrifice to this perfidious policy---by degrees the bann was put upon the very name of Whiggiſm---Thoſe families who had been the foremoſt in the Revolution, or who had been the firmeſt ſupports to the Houſe of Brunſwick upon the Throne, were conſidered as the enemies of the State, and rewarded with diſguſt and diſappointment. *New Counſels and new Counſellors.* The glories of the war, tarniſhed by a peace, huddled up with ſuch precipitation, that the ableſt Miniſter that then remained to them was removed from his employment, for preſuming to demand, at leaſt, ſome equivalent for the ceſſion of one of our moſt important conqueſts. Even a new Adminiſtration, when from an opinion of the ability and integrity of the Miniſter, and the *union* of *its parts*, it began to take a conſiſtency, and to ſtrike root in the affections of the people, was haſtily and with a rude hand plucked up, without one reaſon being to be aſſigned for ſo ſtrange a reſolution, but that its *ſtrength* was

was become *formidable*. What changes, what inconſiſtencies, what *double meaſures*, have not ſucceeded through *theſe adviſers*, till the Adminiſtration was at laſt firmly ſettled upon the preſent Miniſter, whoſe ſtability has been owing to the vices, not the virtues of his character. Without ambition, without attachment, without public opinions; too indolent to enterprize, too careleſs to reſiſt, too indifferent to cabal; yielding to the meaſure ſuggeſted at the moment, living by expedients, blind to conſequences, and hardened to reputation as to events. Cruel *adviſers!* infatuated *ſyſtem!* If the loſs of thirteen provinces, the imminent danger of our iſlands, the lives of ſo many thouſand fellow ſubjects, the diſgrace of our flag, the ſtarving condition of Ireland, the decay of our manufactures, the condition of the landed property, the near approaches to a public bankruptcy, and the extremities to which deſpair will drive a diſtracted people, cannot touch your hearts, let us look to ſome other quarter for our ſalvation. Our conſtitution is as yet entire, though its wheels are clogged by corruption. In deſpotic countries there is no remedy to bad Government but the ſword;

it

it is the glory of England, that the people have always the remedy in their hands.---*law*, as well as reaſon and juſtice, are on their ſide---They need only ſpeak through their repreſentatives---the purſe is theirs---a general election is at hand---*let them ſpeak and they will be heard.* Let the work of reformation begin, let the real grievances be redreſſed---let the Miniſters of the King feel themſelves as they ought, the ſervants of the Public, not the ſlaviſh tools of the cloſet---let the influence of the Crown receive a check, let the boundleſs profuſion of public money be governed by wiſe regulations of œconomy, and above all, oblige the ſecret adviſers of the Crown, *thoſe who think its power ſhould be ſtill extended*, to relinquiſh their wretched ſyſtem; we ſhall then, once more, ſee oſtenſible and reſponſible Miniſters choſen for their abilities, and ſupported by the confidence of a united people. The *public* intereſt will be then their care; the current of profuſion will be ſtopped; and the evils of a civil war which this conteſt, if continued, will but too certainly produce, may be prevented, by a timely exertion of national ſpirit, and legal and Parliamentary authority.

FINIS.

On Thurſday the 25th of November was Publiſhed,

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AND

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